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UNCLAS NAIROBI 000635

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: MUSLIMS PROTEST IN NAIROBI OVER CARTOONS OF THE PROPHET

**¶1.** (SBU) A group of approximately 2,000 Muslim protestors held what began as a peaceful march in Nairobi February 10 to condemn the cartoons of the Prophet Mohammed initially published in a Danish newspaper. The procession began immediately after the Friday prayers at downtown's Jamia Mosque and was led by its Imam, Mohamed Swalihu. Other Muslims, organized by the Supreme Council of Kenya Muslims (SUPKEM), joined in from the other large city mosque at the Sir Ali Muslim Club. The protestors marched though several streets in the city center and presented a protest memorandum to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs calling for the closure of the Danish Embassy. A sub-set of between 300 and 400 protestors attempted to proceed to the Danish Embassy, which was closed for the day, but were stopped by anti-riot police. (NOTE: There are two USAID project offices next to the Danish Embassy which were closed on that day as a precaution. END NOTE.) One youth was shot and injured in the leg by anti-riot police, although a police spokesman subsequently denied that police had used live ammunition. In the wake of this reported shooting and police use of excessive force, the demonstrators commandeered two vehicles, at least one reportedly to ferry wounded to the hospital. One of the vehicles overturned, killing one protestor and injuring an unknown number of others.

**¶2.** (SBU) An additional protest took place in Mombasa on February 11. In remarks at this event, Chief Kadhi Hammad Kassim, Mvita MP Najib Balala and Mombasa Mayor Taib Ali Taib said Muslims were worried about a possible repeat of such caricatures and would continue with protests as they saw necessary. They added that they were not satisfied with apologies from Danish authorities.

BELLAMY